



A Lot of Hard Yakka

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Between 1980 and 1993, Simon Hughes was a regular on the county circuit, playing for Middlesex until 1991 before moving on to Durham at the end of his career. In that time, he played alongside some of the great characters in cricket: Mike Brearley, Mike Gatting, Phil Edmonds and Ian Botham. This is not an autobiography of a good county pro, but a look at the ups and downs, the lifestyle, the practical jokes and sheer hard yakka that make such a poorly paid, insecure job appeal to so many. Now a respected journalist and broadcaster, Simon Hughes has written a brilliant, amusing and wily self-deprecating book, packed with hilarious and embarrassing anecdotes about some of the greatest cricketers of the last 20 years.

A Lot of Hard Yakka Details

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Author : Simon Hughes

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From Reader Review A Lot of Hard Yakka for online ebook

John Grinstead says

It's a shame Hughes didn't play cricket as well as he writes....otherwise he'd have got 50 caps!

Sean Mccarney says

Great stories from the life of a county cricketer in the days when the game was an extension of being good at sport at school, when fitness was about how many beers you could fit in with lunch and before sports science reared its ugly head!

Peter Kobryn says

Having watched Simon Hughes for some years fulfilling his role as "The Analyst" on Test Match coverage this was always going to be an interesting read.

This book takes a brisk clip through the author's career as a county cricketer providing rare insight into the way in which 1980's county cricket operated, how cricketers were able to make a career and the challenges that they faced and the way that relationships worked within the dressing room.

The pecking order in the dressing room is a fluid and, at times, unforgiving dynamic and this is admirably illustrated by this book. Those like Hughes who, while an excellent cricketer, was never a star, lived on the fringes of wondering where their next contract would be coming from. The difference in the way players were treated when part of the team and then 12th man (substitute) is eye opening.

This is a good book, I would have enjoyed it even more if the pace had been a little more measured through the story but for any cricket fan this is a good read.

Andy Cumming says

This is a fairly pedestrian plod through a career with no great insights or shocking anecdotes but it is a pleasant enough read.

Craigb says

This is a cracking read for any cricket fan. Since leaving the game Simon is one of the best cricketing commentators in the game. If you're wondering why then read this book. He tells the story of his career in county cricket. (I loved the stories of Gatting's famous breakfasts.) Simon was not good enough for the test team but he still got to play State cricket in Australia. A thumbs up from me if you like your cricket.

4triplezed says

Very good sports book. The life and times of an average player written with wit and a large dose of world weariness.

Nzudon says

what life is all about.

Henry says

As a highly dysfunctional young boy, county cricket was one of my early obsessions. I harboured a dislike for all things Middlesex, the affluent, glamorous half of London it seemed to me, with the team and ground to match. Surrey was my love, the Oval in the late 1980s, with its run down gasometers and crumbled down comprehensive school neighbours, and absence of scrambled eggs and smoked salmon neckwear, might have been separated by a mere mile or two, but to me reflected South London soul above North London pretensions. This was of course before London became merely a place where some people own houses worth more than their entire lifetime productive earnings, and the others live like impoverished students despite being in their mid to late 30s or older, soporified by pop up restaurant crapola and excited by casual sex, as so many different creeds and cultures, they get picked for their new "flavour", not needing to make the effort to be empathetic, disciplined, respectful the things that matter in real relationships in more functional places.

And Simon Hughes especially raised my prepubescent heckles. In a bowling line up of impossible glamour, the 2 best spinners in the world, West Indian pacemen, here was a balding, short, medium fast trundler that merely got the odd wicket as he was seen as the "opportunity" to launch (of course this did him a great disservice).

And then he wrote a book, that caused a huge stir for a sports autobiography, won multiple awards, and has been on my to be read list for 20 years.

Obviously now, it is read through eyes misted with nostalgia, but much of its heterodoxical elements still strike one. Unafraid to label Botham insecure, unafraid to outline his own failings and hang ups, it appears to show far more of the realities of life as a professional cricketer in this period than the norm.

Steve Cuss says

Honest and insightful and quite funny in places

James says

For those of us who were made to endure the spectacle of the England cricket team throughout the 1990's, Simon Hughes provides us with compelling reasons for the team's dismal performances.

During the mid 70's and throughout the 80's, the West Indies revolutionised the game with aggressive, physical fast bowling. During the 1990's Australia introduced a new intensity to cricket. While sports science, nutrition (which in truth might have side stepped Shane Warne), cricket academies, were all being utilised by England's antipodean adversaries. Meanwhile, back in England, at the home of cricket, Lords, a young Philip Clive Roderick "Phil" Tufnell could be found smoking cigarettes in the Middlesex changing rooms. Pre-season training was more concerned with eating than the honing of cat like reflexes. And, on one occasion the author hastily dons his pads to act as night watchman, after having spent too much of his afternoon in the ground's beer tents. The rest of the world got serious about cricket while the English mentality still believed that a good range of cakes during the tea interval, was just as important as selecting bowlers who complimented one another.

Hughes tells his story of having played English County Cricket for over a decade. It's a very straight forward, easy to read account, but also one that feels imbued with genuine degree of honesty and self deprecation. While many cricket books might be able to wax more lyrically about the game, Hughes presents a very much warts and all narrative to provide the reader with a glimpse of a sport whose professionals were poorly paid, and whose behaviour was, on occasions, even worse.

John says

I really don't believe that I had heard of Simon Hughes until I read his books. He later turned up as an analyst on Channel 4's cricket coverage.

However, his skill in producing a perfectly created, hilarious book about his cricket exploits is brilliant.....

My favourite quote from the book is of John Emburey [famed English spinner] who noticed that his bat was broken and so eloquently stated "the f**king f**kers f**king f**ked". Thereby proving that cricketers are just as verbose as their footballing colleagues.

Jerry Smith says

Hard Yakka is a book I have been meaning to read for probably 15 years and I finally got around to it. I love this style of writing - humorous, self-deprecating and providing an insight into a world we probably never otherwise see.

Pretty much a book of its time, covering the late 80s and early to mid 90s. I would be interested to learn how things have changed on the county circuit since then, as the game has become more professional and the money has risen, not to mention the new forms of the game that are played these days.

However this was one for my generation in that we get to learn a lot about playing at Middlesex in those times under Brearley, Gatting, Downton et. al. and I found it very amusing and easy to read.

There is nothing particularly deep or profound here, but rather an eye-openng look at the game as played on the county circuit by a self-confessed journeyman who was good, but never played for England. Although it is arguable an autobio it is more about the game than about SH and it is funny in all the right places.
